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# What Are The Parental Beliefs On The Relationship Between Poverty And Low-Grade Achievement?

Selamawit Ayalkebet  
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*School of Education Student Capstone Projects*. 229.  
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WHAT ARE THE PARENTAL BELIEFS ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POVERTY  
AND LOW-GRADE ACHIEVEMENT?

by

Selamawit Ayalkebet

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts  
in Education.

Hamline University

Saint Paul, Minnesota

August 2018

Capstone Project Facilitator: Professor Julianne Scullen, Ed.S.

Content Expert: Dr. Girum Lemma

Peer Reviewer: Rachel McLaughlin and Grecia Zermeno-Castro

**Dedication**

I want to first thank God for helping me with every step in my study and my life. I would not have done this without you, Jesus. Second, to my precious son, Nathan, who inspired me to pursue my Master's degree. Thank you so much for being there for me all the time and motivating me and encouraging me without ceasing. I love you more than life itself, and I did this for you and because of you. You are my perfect gift from God and I am blessed to have you as my son. Everything in my life was dull before I had you, but now, everything is bright and shiny, thanks to you Nati. Lastly, I want to thank my brother, Alula, for helping me push myself and proceed to pursuing my Master's degree and for not allowing me to aim less than my potential.

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## Abstract

Selamawit A. 2018. This project addresses the question: *What are the parental beliefs on the relationship between poverty and low-grade achievement?* It documented a well-written essay of the correlation between poverty and low-grade achievement. For my Literature Review chapter, I used sources that researchers conducted on studies related to my research question and I talked about how to understand low-grade achievement with the following lens: socioeconomics status of children and their families, socio-cultural status, family background and how these concepts are connected to low-grade achievement and what schools and teachers can do to best help students who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds to succeed in school. My findings were that there is indeed a relationship between poverty and low-grade achievement and the causes were malnourishment, lack of school supplies, mental and physical health problems. (134 words)

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

In this research paper, I will explore: *What are the parental beliefs on the relationship between poverty and low-grade achievement?* And what schools and teachers can do to best help students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds succeed in school. I was first intrigued by this topic in 2014, when I started my graduate study at Hamline University. There were many discussions in my classes with my peers and my professors on this topic, primarily negative ones. I heard that students raised in socioeconomically and socio-culturally marginalized families were experiencing various kinds of educational inequities in schools. These marginalized groups are more likely to encounter challenges pertaining to their academic success, cognitive development, language development, emotional and social well-being, physical and mental health. I also explored the concepts of family background and family involvement and how these two things related to the children's success in school and their overall well-being in life. Finally, I will investigate how students who have books and internet access at home are more successful at school and how the family background of students has more impact on the students' academic success versus the teachers' effort to help them do well in school. In fact, Wilson and Martin (2000) explain, "According to this perspective, students' test scores are not determined by the size of their classrooms, the physical condition of their school buildings, the number of volumes in their school libraries or the amount of money their school districts spend per pupil. Rather, these scores are more strongly associated with the occupations, incomes, and levels of education

of their parents and with the number of books and magazines in their homes” (p. 25). In the next chapter, I will discuss my rationale for choosing to write my project.

## **Rationale**

I became interested in my research question when I started my graduate study at Hamline University. During class discussions, I started hearing my peers and my professors saying that children who came from poor family were low-grade achievers, (students who receive less than C in class as their grade) and I did not understand the relationship between poverty and low-grade achievement. As I completed my classes and advanced toward earning my master’s degree in Education, my curiosity grew more and more, and I knew that I wanted to do my capstone project on this topic. I was puzzled by the statistics that showed that students in poverty are low-grade achievers in school, because it was such a contrast from my own situation; despite the fact that we do not have a lot of income, my 12-year-old son is an honor student. Thus, I wanted to find out why, faced with the same circumstances, my son is a high achiever in school, and other students are not.

I started thinking about the fact that perhaps the background and upbringing of the child is important. It seemed important that I, too, had a good educational foundation in my country; I went to a private French school and I was, and continue to be, a high achiever. Making such a significant financial investment to send me to the best private school in the country showed me that education is important. I knew that, with God, I could accomplish anything I set my mind to. My great faith in Him helps me want to do good things with my life everyday, no matter what challenges I encounter.



For example, when I was only two years old, my mother, who was a nurse, was murdered by the Ethiopian government, as was my maternal grandfather, who was a Lieutenant General in the Army in Ethiopia. My biological father lives in America, but he did not raise me because he feared for his safety and his life and left Ethiopia when I was very young. Thus, my maternal grandmother raised me with so much love, and so many good morals, in a Christian home. Now, I have many goals and visions in my life that I want to pursue, and I know that they are attainable because I worked so hard in my education and my career experiences, despite the obstacles I faced. I speak four languages fluently (Amharic, English, French, and Tigrinya), and I know that these skills will help me communicate and work with diverse groups of people from all walks of life. My professional goal is similar to my personal goal.

Professionally, my goal is to start an American English school in Addis Ababa, the capital of my country, Ethiopia in order to help children and their families attain access to a good education, but with affordable tuition. I also want to provide scholarships to families who might not be able to afford to send their children to my school so that every child and family can have access to the best education possible. The professors at Hamline University taught me the best pedagogy and the steps to implement it. Amongst the many useful things that I learned at Hamline University, I believe, is the importance of reflection, which helps me every day to stop and think about my actions and how to improve them. Reflection is important in our personal matters and our professional matters because, when we take time to reflect on our actions, we learn from our mistakes, and refrain from repeating the same mistakes over and over again.

I want my capstone project to help other educators and school administrators, but I also want my project to bring real change in the United States, and impact policy developments and

motivate lawmakers to enact policies that will be implemented in schools to ensure all students receive the best education possible.

As a result of my capstone project, I want to learn about the reasons, relationships, and correlations between poverty and low-grade achievement, and how we can solve this epidemic in our society today. I want to help specific stakeholders which are: elementary students (and families) in public charter schools, as well as policy makers. I want to influence policy makers to develop policies around my research question topic as I mentioned above, and enact it so that schools in the United States can start implementing it and change theory to practice.

## **Summary**

I chose my research question topic, *What are the parental beliefs between poverty and low-grade achievement*, because I want to explore the relationship between poverty and low-grade achievement and why the causality exists. I also wanted to know how schools and teachers can help students who came from lower socioeconomic status succeed academically in school. I first became intrigued with this topic three years ago when I started my graduate study at Hamline University. My hope is that other teachers and school administrators will benefit from my findings. I also want to use my own findings when I open my private American English school in Ethiopia, helping students from all walks of life.

Chapter two will include a literature review of existing studies related to my research topic. I will discuss them, reflecting and analyzing the sources, as they relate to my own research question: *What are the parental beliefs on the relationship between poverty and low-grade achievement?* In chapter 3, I will describe my plan for my project, a professional

development opportunity for teachers and other education professionals. I want to teach them about the relationship or correlation between poverty and low-grade achievement and the many ways that poverty affects students to succeed academically in schools. I want my audience to learn that there is indeed a correlation between poverty and low-grade achievement and that there are many reasons for affecting a child's academic endeavors. I will finish with my chapter four as my reflection chapter about what I learned throughout the process of my research. It is good to note that I was an immigrant student myself, I also believe that immigrant students are pressured by their peers in school to assimilate and forget about their own culture. I have experienced a tremendous pressure to assimilate and not to integrate. When I spoke my native language in schools, I was ridiculed by my peers and was viewed as an outcast. My experiences have led me to believe this is a primary reason why immigrant students decide to just assimilate. They don't want to feel like an outcast when they are so eager to blend in and belong with their peers.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Introduction**

Chapter two will include a literature review of current research related to my topic, which is: *What are the parental beliefs on the relationship between poverty and low-grade achievement?* Each study dealt with one aspect of my research topic, giving me a well-rounded view of the issue. My research helped me uncover what education is needed to guide teachers and professionals and help students who come from families with a lower socioeconomic status.

#### **Cognitivism**

During my time as a master's student, I came to embrace cognitivism. The definition of cognitivism refers to mental activity including thinking, remembering, learning and using language. When we apply a cognitive approach to learning and teaching, we focus on the understanding of information and concepts. If we are able to understand the connections between concepts, break down information and rebuild with logical connections, then our retention of material and understanding will increase (Raines, Pronti, & Taylor, 1996).

#### **Understanding Low-Grade Achievement due to Poverty**

When children live in poverty, they experience many challenges in life; low-grade achievement is among the most common. Even though many researchers have indicated that some children living in poverty are low-grade achievers, I want to know the correlation between poverty and low-grade achievement. I also want to find out why there is a correlation and how parents, teachers and school administrators can help students overcome this obstacle and succeed

in school academically. I will examine the findings of many researchers and their studies to come up with the reasons for the relationship between poverty and low-grade achievement.

Understanding this correlation is necessary in order to understand why this effect exists.

A book called *Beyond Discipline, from Compliance to Community* by Kohn (1996) comes to mind when thinking about my research question: *What is the relationship or correlation between poverty and low-grade achievement?* This book discussed the traditional classroom management system and how that system only solves the problem of students' behavioral and academics problems temporarily. This system only makes them comply in the classroom but never teaches them to value and care for their teachers, peers and citizens in their community. In fact, Kohn (1996) explains, "Apart from critiquing traditional classroom methods, Kohn offers an alternative method, a "Student Direct" model that transforms the classroom into a democratic community that recognizes the needs and interests of both the teachers and the students" (p.1).

### **Causes and Effects**

I will also investigate how parents, teachers and school administrators can help students become successful in school academically, despite the socioeconomic status to which the children might be subjected.

One study examines the relationship between 122 parents and their children, who were between one and thirty-six months of age. These were participants in an Early Head Start program. The finding showed that the children were negatively affected by their parents' socioeconomic status (Sharkins et al., 2017, p. 493). This difficulty resulted in them having

academic achievement problems. The same research study shows how prevalent child poverty is in the United States, “Early childhood poverty is a prevalent social issue, both in the United States and in the wider international community. It has been well established that factors associated with poverty, including familial income and parental education level, can negatively affect children’s language and cognitive development, which can result in academic achievement deficits that compound across the lifespan” (Sharkins et al., 2017, p. 493). According to Sharkins et al. (2017) there is a correlation between poverty and low-grade achievement because children who live in poverty are frequently malnourished and because these children are not nurtured to develop academically, socially and emotionally. Often, children from low socioeconomic backgrounds do not have as much access to books, internet, or the necessary materials they need to do their homework. Furthermore, these children experience pressure and stress from their peers and from their environment at an early age, and begin having low self-esteem and low self-image, which can contribute to their low-grade achievement. Thus, this article does a good job showing the existence of the correlation between poverty and low-grade achievement, which ultimately affects the cognitive development of children living in poverty.

### **Poverty and How Children are Affected in their Cognitive Development**

While Sharkins, Leger, and Ernest (2017), found a correlation between poverty and low-grade achievement, authors of another study show how this affects children (Rouse, Fantuzzo, & LeBoeuf, (2011). These researchers found that children who live in poor households are affected in their cognitive development. They cite a study done on the “comprehensive challenges that exist and the effect it has on the well-being of young children” (p. 297). The participants in this research were children, ranging in age between birth and the end of third grade. Rouse, et al.

(2011) emphasized, “This study found that cumulative risk, or the number of individual risk factors that a child experiences between birth and the end of third grade, was significantly related to all academic and behavioral outcomes” (p. 297). And one of the risk factors talked about in this study was poverty. Thus, this research addresses the core issue of my research question, which asks what schools and teachers do to best help students who come from lower-socioeconomic backgrounds to succeed in school. This relationship is due to children having malnutrition at home. Due to poverty, these children do not have enough exposure to books to help them develop cognitively. Stress and frustrations leads to behavioral issues due to low self-esteem, low self-image and efficacy. It is important to note that these are just some of the effects children experience when they are being raised in poverty. I will discuss why the correlation exist later on in my paper.

In another study, the author, Huang (2015) explains that students themselves can change their academic achievement through persistence, determination and hard work. In fact, past studies only focused on how educators can help close the achievement gap. They never addressed the fact that the students can help eliminate the gap itself. He goes on to illustrate the fact that students are active learners and can take charge of their own learning. The study uses

“the 2012 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) U.S. data to address the research questions. 1) How poverty affects student achievement in mathematics, science, and reading? 2) How student background such as gender, immigration status, language spoken at home, and socioeconomic and cultural status affects their academic success? 3) How school characteristics such as size, location, student climate, teacher certification, and leadership directly impacts a child’s success? The final sample includes 4,978

15-year-old students randomly drawn from 162 schools. The schools were selected with a stratified sampling procedure weighting their sizes (p. 9)".

The findings of this study indicate that even though students are active learners and they can change their socioeconomic status through hard work and persistence, the Bronfenbrenner theory, also referred as Bioecological systems theory, done in 1979 emphasizes that, the microsystem (the child's immediate surroundings, such as his family and peers, are the influencer) and the macrosystem (the child's culture and beliefs) hinders them from reaching their potential because they are limited by these two environmental systems (Psychology Notes HQ, 2013).

It must be noted that even though the microsystem and the macrosystem of children's environment might affect the children from reaching their potential, schools and teachers can influence this hindrance of students tremendously and they can help students succeed academically, emotionally and socially in schools. Educators can do this by showing and having high expectations for their students, by giving their students detailed, specific and constructive feedbacks on school assignments, and by showing their students that they are important and their voices will be heard in their schools.

Thus, even though students living in poverty can be affected tremendously by the low SES of their homes, they can overcome the problem that they might encounter, including obstacles in the following areas: self-regulation; emotional and cognitive development; self-esteem and self-image, language development; academic achievement deficit; malnourishment; and access to books, internet and other learning materials at home to succeed



academically at school. Thus, the various studies done on the correlation between poverty and low-grade achievement are all connected in that they all state in their findings that poverty affects children's success in schools.

### **Poverty and Children's Health**

Bratsis (2016) highlights how children living in poverty are affected by their living circumstances and how their health is suffering; the number of poor families and children in the United States is mind-boggling. In fact, Bratsis (2016) explains, "The number of poor children younger than 18 rises to 43%, or 31.5 million, when families designated as "poor," "near poor," and "low-income" are included in census data, according to the AAP (p. 14). Furthermore, the authors emphasize that some of these effects last a lifetime. For example, some children who are exposed to poverty for an extended period of time have been found to have ongoing issues with cognitive and linguistic development, mental health, or even cardiovascular health. Bratsis (2016) illustrates the correlation of children's low-grade achievement with poverty, writing,

"Kids are sleeping at their desks after being up all night, wheezing with untreated asthma. They are failing tests because they don't have the glasses they need to read a lesson on the blackboard. They are being held back a grade because they can't hear the teacher. They are acting out because they are traumatized by extreme stress in their home. These are the health burdens of poverty that weigh on children in classrooms every day" (p. 14).

Bratsis (2016) explains how children living in poverty have their physical health affected. In fact, Bratsis (2016) states, "The number of poor children younger than 18 rises to 43%, or 31.5 million, when families designated as 'poor,' 'near poor,' and 'low-income' are included in

census data, according to the AAP” (p. 14). I feel that it is mind boggling that there are these many children living in poverty in the richest and most powerful country in the world: the United States.

Goodman, Pugach, Skolnik, and Smith (2013) talk about how children living in poverty encounter stress at home and in school and become depressed or acquire many other mental illnesses. Some of these children’s mental health disorders go undetected for many years until they become either too evident to hide or it is too late to help them. According to Goodman et al. (2013), poverty causes stress and stress can manifest itself in mental health problems.

Schools and educators can request funding for students who would qualify for a grant to purchase eyeglasses, hearing aids and many more tools for these children in order to learn in schools. Schools should conduct a thorough health screening in order to determine what students’ health needs are. Subsequent interventions will help students be healthy and more able to succeed academically. In order to achieve this, policymakers need to enact laws that will ensure the well-being of every child in the United States. This concern for health needs to be prioritized, regardless of the students’ socioeconomic status.

## **Mental Health**

Next, I will address the mental health issues that some children are experiencing and what schools and teachers can do about this epidemic. Similar to the study above, Bratsis (2016), Goodman, Pugach, Skolnik and Smith (2013) conducted a study about how children’s health is affected by poverty and illustrate the barriers that poor families face. According to Goodman et al. (2013), “Poverty causes stress and stress can manifest itself in mental health problems” (p. 182). However, some children in poor families don’t have healthcare services or even the

finances to pay for mental health treatments. Thus, their conditions worsen and they begin having academic, emotional, and social challenges (Goodman et al., 2013, p. 182). It is important that schools and teachers establish counselors and psychologists on site, regardless of the tremendous funding needed. Given the evidence, schools should prioritize these issues and allocate funding accordingly. Perhaps, this action would be more beneficial than funneling funds into more computer labs or teachers' assistants jobs. Children can only learn well if they are healthy and are not experiencing stress and mental health issues in their lives. Poverty, health, and education are directly connected and it is the responsibility of schools, teachers, policymakers and parents to do something about it. Not only do immigrant students struggle with poverty but they are also pressured to assimilate to the American culture. This pressure increases stress when a simple act of integrating their culture and the American culture together would eliminate this obstacle. Retaining their identity is important for them to develop self-efficacy and self-esteem.

### **Assimilation versus Integration**

Students' socio-cultural status is important to this discussion because there is a strong link between students' socio-cultural status and academic success. For instance, Roche, Ghazarian, and Fernandez-Esquer (2012) illustrate that students of Mexican origin are sometimes expected to forget their own culture and their own identity in school and assimilate to the American culture. However, this approach proves ineffective, as demonstrated in a study involving 755 male and female Mexican immigrants. Roche et al. (2012) of the *Children of Immigrant Longitude study*, found that the students who had a good relationship with their immigrant families and were taught their original culture at home were more academically

successful than those who assimilated to the American culture. This suggests that immigrant students will gain more self-confidence in themselves and retain their identity if they are not continuously pressured by schools and teachers to assimilate to the American culture, forgetting about who they are and where they came from. Instead, immigrant children do better when they integrate their culture with the American culture. Together these two aspects create a feeling of pride in their cultural identity. In order to meet these needs, teachers should attend community learning workshops so that they learn what practices help students to retain their values and culture while learning the characteristics of American culture as well. Both aspects, the old and the new, need to be learned to allow students to develop their identities.

Thus, it is crucial for teachers to be aware of the conflicts that can exist between immigrant students and American students, and to teach their students about empathy. At the same time, immigrant students should share their values and culture and educate their peers about their countries of origin; this way, they may not feel obligated to assimilate to the American culture and forget about their own. In the next paragraph, the relationship between social and emotional development, self-efficacy and poverty is discussed.

### **Social and Emotional Development**

Additional studies show the social and emotional development is more easily achieved when homeless youth are transitioned into stable housing. “Education, employment, criminal justice, and housing systems along with supporting family reunification if feasible” are necessary for kids to achieve academically (Kidd, Fredrick, Karabanow, Hughes, & Naylorp, 2016, p. 217). In fact, Kidd et al. (2016) illustrates the study, “We sought youth between the ages of 16 and 25

who reported a history of at least 6 months of past homelessness, and the criteria of “stability” for the purposes of recruitment was given as (i) in the 2 months–2 year period since homelessness, housing had been steadily maintained with no substantial periods of homelessness” (Kidd et al. 2016, p. 209). Kidd et al. (2016) found that the homeless students routinely had poor self-images and felt inferior to their peers. These academic, social, and emotional effects of homelessness contribute to the low-grade achievement and the achievement gap among these students. It shows that this correlation of homelessness and low-grade achievement existed in these students and the above study was measurable and quantifiable in that these students were studied for an extended period of time. This social status of poverty and homelessness can also lead students to illnesses, such as ADHD and autism.

Similar to the Kidd et al. (2016) study I discussed above, Flouri, Midouhas, Charman, and Sarmadi (2015) explain the findings of a study done on children who had autism with ADHD and who were not poor. The result showed that the children in poverty encountered many emotional and behavioral problems, compared to the children who had illnesses but were not living in poverty. Thus, the study concluded that when children are exposed for an extended period of time in poverty, their emotional and behavioral well-being suffers (Flouri et al., 2015). This suggests that when children get exposed to poverty for an extended period of time, they start being affected by it emotionally and their behaviors change for the worse. Thus, the correlation between poverty and low-grade achievement becomes evident and children not only have cognitive development problems but they can actually acquire illnesses, such as ADHD and autism and their emotional well-being is affected. Additionally, as a result of poverty, children

can also start internalizing and externalizing the problems they are experiencing at home and become more affected by them more than their peers.

Rijlaarsdam, Stevens, Ende, Hofman, Jaddoe, Mackenbach and Tiemeier (2013) discuss a study done using “Prospective data from fetal life to age 3 years collected in a total of 2,169 families participating in the Generation R Study” (p. 125). This study was done for the purpose of finding out the correlation between poverty and low-grade achievement and social and emotional development problems in children. The main reason the study was done was to find out how children internalize and externalize things and situations and how children who are living in poverty are greatly affected both internally and externally compared to their peers in non-poverty households.

### **Language Development in Children and How Parents’ Involvement Improves Literacy**

Other articles reference in-depth research done using five preschool class, with fifteen to seventeen students in each class. The goal of the study was to try to find out if parental involvement and parental positive attitude for education can influence their children to excel in literacy and become high academic achievers. The study further wanted to understand the relationship between poverty and language formation and development. In fact, Rose, Vaughn, and Taylor (2015) emphasize, “Parent participation in literacy linked activities showed significant effect on student literacy skills in the areas of understanding of letter and sound relationships, use and appreciation of books, and participation in class read-alouds and book discussions” (p. 82). Thus, even though, students can experience poverty and personal challenges at home, if they have parents who are involved in their studies at school and show them that

education is important, the students will be able to succeed. It is good to note that the study also examined the involvement of teachers and found out that, even though teachers don't have as tremendous an influence on children as their parents, it is possible for them to restructure literacy and teach these students literacy "using cultural competency (using the students culture to teach and helping them use their existing knowledge to learn new concepts) language cards (these are cards labeled with pictures that the students are already familiar with on one side of the card and the name of the thing on the other side of the card, ex. Elephant picture and the word elephant written on the back), interactive homework (a multi-sensory language arts homework geared in phonics learning using zoo animals), and family outreach outside schools to encourage parents to get involved in their children's academic endeavors and help them succeed in school" (Sharkins, Leger & Ernest, 2017). I will now explore the issue of parents who have their Bachelor's degrees and are or not involved in their children lives .

### **Parents/Guardians and Academic Degrees and the Effect on Children**

Research shows over and over that children with parents or guardians who have their Bachelor's degree are more likely to succeed academically than their peers who don't have any parents or guardians with their Bachelor's degree (Benner, Boyle, & Sadler, 2016). This suggests that children who have one or both parents or guardians with at least a Bachelor's degree have a higher success rate than children who don't have any parents with a Bachelor's degree. This is because the children start believing in themselves by using their parents as a role models to pursue their education and become successful academically. It is also because of the self-esteem

and confidence these students gain from living with parents or guardians who went to school and got a degree.

### **Parental Involvement and High Academic Expectations have a Positive Effect on their Children's Lives**

The importance of parents having high-expectations for their children and also showing them positive attitude for education cannot be overstated (Benner, Boyle, & Sadler, 2016). Their study done is about the effect of parental involvement and children and the depth of the impact or effect it has on them. In fact, Benner et al. (2016) explain, “Our analysis sample was comprised of 15,240 students...from 752 schools” (p. 1056). The findings of the study were that parental involvement in children play a vital role in children's academic success. Furthermore, the parents' socioeconomic status is directly reflecting on their children's academic achievement. To illustrate, Benner et al. (2016) write, “Low-income parents and less educated parents are more likely to express lower educational expectations for their children compared to more affluent parents” (p. 1054). Thus, when parents don't have high expectations for their children, children tend to have low-grade achievement. Supporting the findings of the above article, Wilson and Martin (2000) conducted their own research on the issues of race, poverty, and test scores and attempted to answer this important and crucial issue of the relationship between poverty and low-grade achievement, by digging deeper, and found out that there are five determinants of low test scores and low-grade achievement.

Wilson and Martin (2000) explain, “Scholars have long observed an association between poverty and low tests scores (Coleman, 1990; Jencks, 1972). However, they have debated



explanations for this association. Five major positions have dominated this debate: 1) the family background perspective, 2) the unequal educational resources view, 3) the concentrated poverty and social dislocation thesis, 4) the culture of poverty theory, and 5) the central racial factor” (p. 23). Specifically, this relationship between parents and children was researched by James Coleman (1990), who in the late 1960s, conducted a massive national study of 4,000 elementary and secondary schools, examining both family background and school resource factors. His findings were that there is a strong impact by the parents of these children’s income, educational level and socioeconomic status and their children’s academic success. However, other researchers contradicted Coleman’s results because they thought that Coleman was saying that schools don’t matter in helping children academically. The family background perspective, then was about the level of education of the parents, and their socioeconomic status. The unequal educational resources view is about the neighborhood of poor children and where they live, the lack of resources at home, such as books and internet access and the mediocre schools they attend that don’t have qualified teachers. The concentrated poverty and social dislocation thesis is about how poor children get low tests scores and live with parents that have no jobs and are therefore receiving welfare assistance. These families are likely to live in neighborhoods with high crime. The culture of poverty theory deals with why low tests scores of children in poor households exists.

Further research also talks about the fact that children in poor households don’t get encouragement and information regarding the importance of education from their families and they are encouraged to get money instantly, without education. In fact, the article emphasizes that, “This poverty subculture may include attitudes and values that place less importance on

education and more importance on immediate gratification or economic rewards (Banfield, 1974, Auletta, 1982, Gilder, 1981 & Murray, 1984). The central racial factor studies show that African American children score low on tests and standardized tests” (Wilson and Martin, p. 23). Thus, parents who are not educated are not equipped to encourage their children or emphasize the importance of getting education. These parents might not demonstrate high expectations for their children either and that can affect the children’s academic success. Another key point is that children see their parent’s action instead of their feelings about the importance of education. In other words, if children observe their parents going to school, working hard for their education and succeeding in life, that is exactly what the children would want to do, versus, parents always talking about the importance of education and yet not doing it themselves. After exploring the importance of one or both parents or guardian having a first degree or parents getting involved with their children closely, I am going to discuss about how a mother and a child’s relationship can have a tremendous effect on the cognitive development of their children (Benner, Boyle & Sadler, 2016).

I feel that the Wallace, Roberts & Lodder (1998) study done is the core reason for children struggling academically. This study was done on 92 African American infants and their mothers and the results were that African Americans mothers had less interaction with their infants and showed them less affection. But the study confirms that, “Affective qualities such as parental sensitivity, responsiveness, and warmth have been positively linked to child cognitive and communicative outcomes” (Wallace et al., 1998, p. 900). Thus, parents should receive education on the importance of interacting and holding their babies and show them love and warmth early on, so they can grow up to think that they are wanted in the World by their parents

and develop understanding that the world is a loving and safe place. This understanding can help children succeed academically, socially and emotionally because they will have a stronger self-image and feel they can accomplish anything. I can personally attest to this because I was raised by my maternal grandmother in a loving home and as a result of growing up in this kind of environment. I have so much confidence in myself now and feel that I can accomplish anything I set my mind to do. In my next paragraph, I will be connecting the research studies done and their main concepts. These are ones that I have read and talked about within my paper and how they relate and explain my research question: *What is the parental beliefs of the relationship between poverty and low-grade achievement?*

Poverty and low-grade achievement seems to be connected through the main concepts I discussed above, which are: the students' socioeconomic status, socio-cultural status, family background and schools and teachers' efforts in helping students succeed.

### **How Educators Can Help**

There are two main beliefs in the United States today regarding who can help students living in poverty succeed in school. The first belief is that the family of the students play a deeper and more significant part in the children's lives and their academic success. The second belief is teachers and educators can help students tremendously, by using different teaching techniques and consistently having high expectations for them.

McMahon, Felix and Nagarajan (2011) conducted a study of sixth and eighth grade students, in four classes, totaling 133 students. They investigated the correlation between social support for African American students and increased self-worth of these students their findings

were, “Correlations suggest that neighborhood disadvantage, and support from parents, classmates, and close friends were associated with self-worth cross-sectionally” (McMahon, Felix, & Nagarajan, 2011, p. 258).

Seydoogullari and Aridag (2012) show the relationship and effect between democratic and positive parents, and students grade achievement and their overall well-being. In fact, this study consisted of one group of parents who encourage their children to love school and appreciate education, because it will help them in their future lives. Another group of parents gave their children rules and regulations to follow in life, without explaining the reasons why the children had to follow and obey these rules, and their attitude toward school was not positive. The findings showed that the positive parents’ children became successful, not only in early grades, but also continued to higher education and attended college. However, the other group of students with parents that only gave them rules to follow and never explained the benefit of education had problems in their early grades and most of them did not attend college. This study was an eye opener and that clearly demonstrated that parents should model to their children that school and education is beneficial and encourage them regularly to excel in school, both academically, socially and emotionally.

### **The Importance of Children Attending School Regularly and how Missing Days can Affect Children’s Academic Success.**

A study in the American Teacher Journal shows that families who are in low socioeconomic status tend to have their children miss many days of school compared to their peers living in higher socioeconomic status. This can be due to various reasons, including

transportation problems, for instance the parents might not have reliable car or the parents work at night and are unable to get up in the morning to give their children ride to their schools.

Whatever the reason causing students to miss many days of school, it is a crucial obstacle that needs to be solved by parents and schools as a team, in order for the children to succeed academically (“The high cost of low attendance,” 2008).

### **Influence of Children’s Peers In Schools**

Examining the facts on peer-involvement in children in urban schools, and the effect that peer pressure, pertaining to substance abuse, can be stronger than the parents’ positive influence. Sometimes that can influence them greatly to the point it can affect the relationship between the parents and the children. In fact, Mason, Mennis, Rusby, Westling, Crewe and Zaharakis explain, “A large amount of literature supports that relations with parents is critical to the emotional and behavioral health of young adolescents” (p. 1442). Thus, this important relationship between parents and children should be valued and protect.

Another study shows that “African American youth in urban centers often reside in poorly resourced communities and face structural disadvantage, which can result in higher rates of poor behavioral health factors such as mental health problems, juvenile justice system involvement, substance use, risky sex and lower school engagement. While parental monitoring has been shown to be protective with regards to these risk factors, less understood are the effects of parental warmth in conjunction with monitoring” (Voisin, D., Harty, J., Ha Kim, D., Elsaesser, C., Takahashi, L. 2017, p. 223). This finding was obtained after some African American youth answered questionnaires regarding how they feel their parents are doing raising

them. For instance, monitoring them, showing them warmth and love, and teaching them about the juvenile justice system and doing the right things in life. And as mentioned earlier, the research shows that the African American parents had other monitoring skills and approaches than showing their children warmth.

The belief regarding how to help students living in poverty succeed in schools is demonstrated in many articles. Despite the fact that there is a belief that parents should be the ones helping their own children, the belief written in this article, Morgan (2012) demonstrates that schools and teachers can have a strong impact on children living in poverty as well, in partnership with their parents to help them succeed in school.

Another research article shares the story of a kindergarten teacher who created a classroom with an atmosphere of “learning together, playing together and a classroom that would help students social and emotional development” (Kirk & MacCallum, 2017, p. 85). The results were that teachers were shown to be the ones who were supporting kindergarten children’s social and emotional development (Kirk et al., 2017). Thus, the teacher did what he or she intended to do and helped students with their social and emotional skills.

Teachers and schools can make greater academic impact on a child’s success despite the fact that a child might not have any resources at home. Furthermore, the study shows that even if the students don’t have parents or guardians who are involved in their lives to help them succeed academically, teachers can still impact their learning. In fact, Morgan (2012) explains, “Although the gap in academic achievement could be the result of many causes such as parental involvement, cultural attitude towards education, and the educational resources available at the

home of a child, the school and its teachers can make a huge impact on a student's education” (pp. 291-292).

Similar to the Morgan (2012) study, this study's findings were that teachers' effectiveness matters and how they teach their students and employ high expectation is important and it can impact children in poverty to be high grade achievers. The study aims to advocate for school improvement models and emphasizes that the model should include three overlapping educational policies toward the goal of quality, equity and efficiency. Furthermore, Teddlie and Stringfield (2017) explain the limitation of another researcher, on this issue, and say, “Edmond's position has led researchers to ignore differences in methods for achieving effectiveness in schools with students from different socioeconomic backgrounds” (p. 23). This means that most researchers tend to conduct their research in urban schools, with many students in low socioeconomic status and generalizes that the schools in urban settings, have students who are struggling academically. This is due to students in different socioeconomic status not being considered. Omitting them from the study makes it an invalid and an inaccurate data collection. Teddlie and Stringfield (2017) still believe in the power of teachers and educators making tremendous impact on students with low socioeconomic status by methodically putting reward systems in schools. These children who were not taught the value of education at home, can still learn it at school and still develop a desire to succeed academically. In fact, Teddlie and Stringfield illustrate,

“In such cases the school must take systematic measures to reward and recognize the behavior it seeks to promote. Students in high elementary schools generally come to school with a more positive academic orientation. Their home background is more likely

to instill them with a high valuation of schooling. This combination of factors promotes higher expectations among the school staff and enables pupils to experience success in school more quickly” (p. 23).

So, according to this study, even if children come from low socioeconomic status households, the school can step in and “take systematic measures to reward and recognize the behavior it seeks to promote” (p. 23). Thus, even if parents don’t teach their children to love school and explain to them the importance of education, schools can intervene and help these students succeed academically.

Further investigation of articles and studies confirms that there is a direct relationship or correlation between poverty and low-grade achievement. In fact, Herbers, Cutuli, Supkoff, Heistad, Chan, Hinz, and Masten (2012) explain, “children from families of lower socioeconomic status (SES) are more likely than peers of higher socioeconomic status to begin school with poor readiness skills and low achievement” (p. 367). This study further states,

“that children who have not experienced poverty and who had the privilege to attend preschool early in their lives have shown to have better communication skills with their teachers and their peers in their later grades and their outlook on education is a positive one and they have a desire to succeed academically at school...on the contrary, children who are living in poverty and never attended preschool don’t have a positive outlook on education, and they demonstrate feelings of frustration and discouragement in school and seem uninterested to learn”. (p. 370-371).



Furthermore, some students who are living in poverty or homelessness are not fluent in literacy and have trouble decoding words when they read and they struggle with comprehension issues. In addition, students from low socioeconomic status families don't always have access to resources they need to be successful in school, such as books, internet or a computer and that can hinder them from doing their homework from school. Moreover, their parents might not have a high level of education and they can't spend time with them to help them do their homework. This neglect can negatively affect them in school. Finally, the parents of students in poverty don't read books aloud for their children for the reason I mentioned above. This affects children because they won't have opportunities to listen to an adult read to them and observe how fluent reading looks like and how a proficient reader has fluency, when reading, how they are able to decode words, able to understand but also pause at punctuations. Thus, if the parents can't model and demonstrate fluent reading to their children, the children will only have one place to even hear someone read, and that is in school.

Lastly, the research done by Gregory and Huang (2013) touched me deeply on a personal level.

“The study draws on data collected in the 2002–2006 Educational Longitudinal Study and employs an underutilized statistical technique (cross-classified multilevel modeling) to account for teacher reports on overlapping groups of students (typical of high school research). Results showed that positive expectations of students, parents, English, and mathematics teachers in the 10th grade each uniquely predicted postsecondary status 4 years later. As a group, the four sources of expectations explained greater variance in

postsecondary education than student characteristics such as SES and academic performance.

This suggests positive expectations are additive and promotive for students regardless of their risk status. Teacher expectations were also found to be protective for low income students” (Gregory, A., Huang, F. 2013, p. 41).

It is interesting that the researchers say students can really succeed if they can have parents and teachers that care about them. That is all it takes for students to get out of low grade achievement status--it only takes for their parents to show them they have high expectations and let them know that they are valued, as well as having teachers who will not give up on them and never accept anything less than their potential. I really believe that it does take a village to change children’s lives and help them be successful in school and in life. We need to care enough to have high expectations of them. Unfortunately, in some schools we see too many teachers and parents have low expectations of students and don’t demand excellence from them. Some of their teachers don’t push students to reach their highest potential. Instead, some teachers and parents don’t care as much about the students’ well-being. These teachers should care about the students social and emotional health, their academic success, and their overall happiness in the long run. We must make students prepared to go out in the world determine their career choice and aspirations. Our students must become productive members of society.

### **How can schools best influence educational practices in the home of students?**

In order for schools to best influence educational practices in the homes of students, teachers and parents should frequently discuss the progress of the students and plan how to best

help them be successful, academically, emotionally and socially. This partnership eliminates the disconnect between home and school. Parents know when assignments are due and teachers know that parents are engaged with their children's academic work at home. Secondly, the students will know and understand that both the parents and the teachers have one common goal, and that is to help them succeed. And lastly, the students will want to make both their parents and teachers proud, so they will start working hard to accomplish the goal set for them.

When I first came across the article, *"These are Our Children!" An examination of relationship-building practices in urban High Schools*, the title captured my eyes and then when I read it, it touched my heart and I wanted to know more. Every person should feel that children are important and that both parents and teachers should attend to them (Shiller, 2009). Thus, teachers, in this particular study fail to care for their students because the students were poor and students of color. We need to educate teachers to help students of color, students who are living in poverty. We need to aid students who are struggling academically at school. Teachers need more training and need to attend Community Learning Workshops regularly in order to enhance their knowledge and help these students.

### **The Importance of School Districts hiring Qualified and Educated Teachers**

Some public schools struggle with having enough funding to hire qualified and educated teachers, and it is crucial that they are supplied with everything they need. Thus, if we want our precious students to be successful at schools and in life, we need to start hiring qualified and educated teachers. Qualified and educated teachers will be equipped to teach relevant and challenging curriculums to help their students reach their maximum potential. Teachers should

take the time to know the backgrounds of their students in order to develop a curriculum relevant to their specific students needs. Additionally, qualified teachers will reflect on their teaching practices regularly and always strive to improve their instruction delivery to their students.

### **The Connection Between the Literature Review and my Research Question**

Research Question: *What are the parental beliefs on the relationship or correlation between poverty and low-grade achievement?*

The health complications are relatively minor but the behavior, mental and emotional problem become acute and overbearing. For example, a child dealing with the struggles of these beliefs about education has the added difficulty because they live in the cognitive realm where there is no solution to their problems. This research supported my conclusion by showing that the cognitive development is a major factor in the child's growth. There were language development problems in children and also mental health issues in children that came from lower socioeconomic status (Sharkin, Leger & Ernest, 2017). I then further examined the context of my research question, which is: *What are the parental beliefs on the relationship between poverty and low-grade achievement?*

With my research question in mind, I started gathering sources for my Literature Review. I focused on the relationship or correlation between poverty and low-grade achievement. Using the lens of socioeconomic status, socio-cultural status, family background, I was able to determine how much value they instill in their children's education. I then proceeded by gathering sources that talked about the causes and effects of poverty concerning achievement. I

then started researching sources that have conducted studies on the health of children and how poverty can affect their cognitive and language development.

## **Summary**

I chose the above sources specifically because they dealt with subjects that impact children's learning and social development. I was also interested in these sources because they have conducted large data collection to arrive at their findings. Lastly, they all said that there is a direct correlation between poverty and low-grade achievement in children and stated different causes that affected students in low socioeconomic status. The sources also pointed out the fact that these students were also affected socially and emotionally in their ability to cope with obstacles, and had low self-image issues. Thus, overall, my standing is that parents, peers, schools and teachers have a tremendous impact on children's academic achievements and that parents, schools and teachers can help students succeed in partnership with each other for the common goal of helping students excel in all areas of life. In Chapter 3, I will discuss my project in detail. I will provide more information regarding on the setting, audiences of my workshop and a professional development opportunity for educators. I will tailor my presentation to educate and teach teachers and professionals about the relationship between poverty and low-grade achievement. I will discuss the fact that children are being affected emotionally, socially and mentally due to living in poverty for an extended period of time. I will then elaborate on the effect poverty has on cognitive and language development.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Methodology

#### Introduction

My research question was: *What are the parental beliefs on the relationship between poverty and low-grade achievement?* First, I wanted to help educate teachers and professionals about the relationship or correlation between poverty and low-grade achievement. Secondly, I wanted to show how teachers and professionals can help students in low socioeconomic status succeed academically. I wanted them to learn that poverty does affect the achievement of students. The reasons for this might be malnourishment, poor physical health, poor mental health, lack of school supplies, lack of internet access or many more. Thus, I created a workshop presentation for teachers and professors. I will discuss my personal education theory, cognitivism.

#### Rationale

I was first thinking about creating a curriculum for my Project but I quickly changed my mind to a workshop using a slideshow. I changed my mind because I sincerely believed our teachers are lacking knowledge when it comes to helping students living in poverty and I wanted to educate them. My project was a reflection of my paper. In my workshop, I discussed how poverty affected children's cognitive, emotional and mental development. I discussed how poverty can be eradicated if we all come together. I displayed different solutions to help these students in lower socioeconomic status. I touched on the persistence of the children themselves as a component in the solution to this epidemic problem. I discussed language development problems and how they can manifest due to poverty. I tried to relay to the teachers and

professionals not only the problem, or even the correlation between poverty and low-grade achievement, but the core solutions they can execute to help solve the problem.

### **Participants and Setting**

I chose to create a workshop for educators that makes a complex situation easier to understand. I wanted teachers and professionals to easily see the scope of the problem and how parental beliefs directly affect the relationship between poverty and low-grade achievement. I wanted the teachers and professionals who attended my workshop to take with them the understanding that there is a correlation between poverty and low-grade achievement and use my suggestions to help students who come from lower socioeconomic status. For example, the teachers can help the students by suggesting they attend tutor sessions after school. Teachers can also set up a fundraising event to collect money for these students who come from lower socioeconomic status. Teachers doing activities like these shows that the teachers have the well-being of the children at heart and are invested in their success. A workshop can display pictures and information that are both educational and entertaining. This is necessary so that the suggestions proposed can be easier to remember for those who attended. I will recommend the presentation to be in a school environment where we can discuss this in a room designated for the event.

### **Methodology**

I used a slideshow to enlighten teachers and professors about the relationship between poverty and low-grade achievement. For example, I talked about the many reasons why poverty affects children academically and I asked teachers and professors to get in groups of three to

discuss their thinking about the issue. For example, I wanted them to think about how a child's learning is affected by lack of nourishment, school supplies, etc. I created the project, a professional development opportunity for teachers and educators, in the summer of 2018 and plan to engage attendees for a half day. In the beginning of my workshop, I will share with them that I was intrigued by the statement that students in a lower socioeconomic status were classified as low-grade achievers. This statement puzzled and baffled me because I did not understand the relationship between poverty and low-grade achievement. As I started my research, I learned that there is a strong relationship between the two and that it was manifested in different ways in children and affected them academically in school. When I was working as a substitute teacher, I observed that sometimes teachers did not have high expectations for children who come from low socioeconomic status households. Teachers would sometimes not ask these students to do their homework or even if they have done their homework. They were not consistently asking these students to speak in class and teachers were not giving these students the opportunity to express themselves. Because of the teachers' low expectations, the children became satisfied with mediocre work and thus low-grade achievement. They stopped aiming for high achievement and they became discouraged. Furthermore, these student were not held to high expectations by their parents. Thus, it becomes difficult to encourage their children to do their homework or school projects. There are also language barriers in some families. Language barriers affect children because it means the parents might not be able to communicate with the students and with their teachers. The children get embarrassed when the parents come to their school and are unable to communicate properly with their teachers.

### **Research Paradigm**



I approached my project in the hopes of discovering how teachers and professionals can better educate these low socioeconomic status students. I hoped it revealed factors teachers can address in the classroom to shrink the academic achievement gap between children coming from low socioeconomic status and those whose parents are well-off financially. When I conducted my literature review, I found that Sharkins, Leger, and Ernest (2017) discussed specifically the language and cognitive development problems children can acquire because of poverty. Huang (2015), on the other hand, argues that children's own persistence is enough to help them get out of their grade achievement deficit. My research suggests that there are many problems children encounter when living in poverty for an extended period of time. It also shares solutions for these problems and helps these students cross the grade achievement gap. The problems plaguing these children are many. These range from cognitive issues, language development barriers, and social and emotional dysfunction to malnourishment, health problems, and mental health problems.

## **Summary**

I wanted to know if parents believe the challenges of poverty can be overcome. I wanted to know if parents with low economic status viewed poverty as an insurmountable obstacle. I wanted to find out if parents from financially secure backgrounds had the same problems. Researching these questions has given a clear and concise idea of the research paradigm. I discovered the circumstances that affect educational outcomes for their children. The circumstances I found to affect academic outcomes are cognitive, language, emotional and mental health problems. For example, many families living in poverty have the additional obstacle of language barriers. Parents who have language barriers have difficulty helping their children with their homework and school projects or even speaking with their child's teachers for

a plan for them to succeed. The parents believe that their language barriers are a hindrance to helping their children academically. Furthermore, parents who believe that getting out of poverty is insurmountable will transfer this belief onto their children since their children often mimic the behavior of their parents. In many instances, when parents experience language barriers, the children suffer academically because they do not get help from their parents to do their homework and school projects. I used the Cognitivism educational theory throughout my paper which I learned in my master's coursework. Cognitivism theory is the study in psychology that focuses on mental processes, including how people perceive, think, remember, learn, solve problems and direct their attention to one stimulus rather than another. Psychologists working from a cognitivist perspective, then, seek to understand cognition.

My core belief as an educator is that children should be positively reinforced and given a reward each time they succeed rather than a punishment for every failure. I have worked with children and I would reward them with candy when they do well or participate in class. This reward system has tremendously improved the students' ability to participate. But after a while, I stopped using candy as a reward system for children because it was not effective anymore.

I also believe that children should work collaboratively because it helps them be more engaged and focused. They also gain the skills to work with others in groups. I believe when children work collaboratively they become happy and stay on task. Working collaboratively also builds the children's self-esteem and self-image and teaches them teamwork.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the limitations of my research and explain any gaps. I will also talk about how my research relates to the larger concept of education and discuss future study recommendations.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Results

#### Introduction

My research question is: *What are the parental beliefs on the relationship between poverty and low-grade achievement?* I have learned many vital things during the process of my Capstone Project and project presentation intended for education professionals. I learned that there is indeed a direct correlation between poverty and low-grade achievement. This can be due to malnourishment, lack of school supplies, lack of internet access, sickness in the body or mind, or lack of proper cognitive development.

#### What I Learned

I learned that students who come from lower socioeconomic status are discriminated against by teachers unintentionally, as teachers do not always have high expectations of them. Furthermore, even though it is sad to say, sometimes parents fail to provide high expectations because they are not educated and lack understanding of the importance of education. I also learned that little is being done to eradicate this epidemic issue, and I created a workshop to inform and educate teachers and professionals about the issue in order to do something about it. My presentation is a small reflection of what all teachers and professors should attend in every school and in each state. Professional development workshops are important so that teachers, professionals, and educators have a deeper understanding of the problem and understand that there are solutions. For example, in my presentation, I talk about schools opening a fundraising account to help families in need financially or teachers encouraging students to attend after school tutoring. Furthermore, in my presentation, I encourage parents to ensure that their

children are in good health both physically and mentally. Parents should work closely with the local agencies to get low cost periodic well visits and follow-up appointments for their children. Also, parents who encourage their children on a regular basis tend to have students who are successful in the classroom (Seydoogullari & Aridag, 2012). Furthermore, a study done by Gregory and Huang (2013) states that when parents had high expectations of their children, the children in 10th grade were doing better than those who were not given high expectations by their parents.

### **Literature Review Summary**

In my research, I have found there is a relationship between students living in poverty and low-grade achievement. In other words, students experiencing poverty are likely to have lower academic achievement than their more financially stable peers. For example, one study by Rose, Vaughn, and Taylor (2014) discussed language development and parental involvement with their children. Children need their parents to be closely involved in their lives. They need books read to them and attention given to them on a regular basis. The results were there is a correlation between poverty and low grade achievement.

Before beginning my research, I had some idea that language development might be affected by poverty. Children may be read to less, and therefore hear fewer words. Flouri, Midouhas, Charman, & Sarmadi (2015) talked about how children in poverty are affected by poverty emotionally, and they may begin to acquire behavioral problems (p. 2928). They may be diagnosed with autism and ADHD in school at later years because it goes undiagnosed due to lack of resources or lower teacher expectations. This is particularly sad because these children do

not always have enough to eat and are malnourished. In addition, they may not have access to medical care and become sick physically, emotionally, or mentally.

Thus, throughout research the articles talked about the same things and solidified my hypothesis that there is indeed a relationship between poverty and low-grade achievement. The causes are generally the same with each study: malnourishment; sickness physically, emotionally, or mentally; lack of school supplies or internet access. But most of all, these children who live in poverty do not have the opportunity to hear books read to them mainly because their parents are not educated and they might not even know how to read or have books in the house. Rouse, Fantuzzo, and LeBoeuf (2011) talk about how children in poverty are affected in their development of their cognitive skills and experience problems academically due to this issue.

In addition, the new connection or understanding I made to the literature review is that I never knew that children can become autistic or develop ADHD due to poverty (Flouri, Midouhas, Charman, & Sarmadi, 2015, p. 2928). I used to think that children developed autism or ADHD due to genetics, or a vaccination gone wrong, but never due to poverty. Thus, I have learned new things after I completed my literature review and read the many prior studies done on this issue.

Roche, Ghazarian, and Fernandez-Esquer (2012) had a different view than the many studies I have read and included in my literature review. They discuss the difference between assimilation and integration and how schools and educators in the present day want children to assimilate (embrace only the United States culture and forget about their own culture) versus integrate (be given a chance to embrace both cultures). During integration, the children are not

being bullied for speaking their own language in schools or dressing in cultural clothing. These children will be given a chance to display their culture with pride and confidence.

Overall, Rouse, Fantuzzo, and LeBoeuf (2017) and Sharkins, Leger, and Ernest (2017) discussed about language and cognitive development problems, and others such as Bratis (2016) talked about health problems in children. Others such as Kidd et al. (2017) studied social and emotional development problems in children caused by poverty. And authors, such as Benner, Boyles, and Sadler (2016) remarked about how children can be affected positively or negatively by their parents' education and whether their parents have bachelor's degree or not. Thus, the main problems stemming from poverty are social and emotional development problems, cognitive development and health problems, language development problems and mental illness.

### **Implications**

My research shows that the correlation between poverty and achievement is a very important issue needing to be addressed by educators and policy makers. Poverty is a hindrance to a child's well-being. A parent that is not from the United States may have difficulty acclimating, and it goes without saying their children get their imprint and do the same thing and have the same difficulty. It is unacceptable that 3.5 million students (43 percent of the United States population) are affected by poverty even though the United States is a very rich and powerful country who goes around the world helping people in poverty (Bratsis, 2016). The issues raised in my research have implications for further study and for additional professional development for educators because the root causes are just too important. I believe that if educators, parents, and school officials take this vital issue to Washington policy and lawmakers,

a solution will arise. My particular project has shown teachers and educators the several possible solutions there are to eradicate this problem. For example, teachers can suggest students attend tutor sessions after school. Parents can work with the county to get the best medical care for their children all the time; teachers can have high expectations for their students and parents should do the same. Teachers can form personal loans systems through organizations without looking at credit scores or other complicated pathways to help them borrow money. Teachers can fundraise for families who qualify and are below the poverty guidelines. Thus, I feel just making minor changes can help with the eradication process. Parents can help their children with their homework and school projects, which most parents can do.

### **Limitations of My Project**

One limitation of my project is that I only had two semesters to research and complete my project, and more time would have been beneficial. I want to see poverty eradicated but there are many factors hindering this from happening, such as shortage of money and resources. One thing that was not covered in my research is the effect of children coming from a single parent household and how that might contribute to low-grade achievement. Sometimes, single parents work two jobs to make ends meet and as a result, they can be absent from their children's academic lives. In the future, there should be a study done on a single parent household and how that affects the children academically, emotionally, mentally, and socially.

### **How I Will Use and Communicate my Results**

Through my presentation, I hope to communicate my learning by talking to teachers and professionals through my workshop and making it easier for them to gain deeper understanding of this issue. This way, they can do something about it because knowledge is always power. The



first thing that I will communicate with them is that there is indeed a relationship between poverty and low-grade achievement. The second thing I will communicate with them is the many causes of poverty that will affect the academic achievement of their students. The third thing is to communicate how they can be of assistance and help these precious children living in poverty succeed in schools and in life. But the most important step is to let teachers and professionals know that there is a problem and describe the problem.

### **How my Project is a Benefit to the Profession**

My project is a benefit to the profession because this issue is an epidemic and my project research not only identified and pinpointed the problem but provided possible solutions to overcome this issue. All in all, I have learned many vital things during my research journey. I am now better educated about this issue and better equipped to solve it than I was prior to starting my capstone project. I was very curious and intrigued in the beginning of my research to answer the following question: *What are the parental beliefs on the relationship between poverty and low-grade achievement?* I did not know where to start, but my research led me to the many studies done about my topic showing that there is a relationship between poverty and low-grade academic achievement. These also identified the effects of poverty in students, such as cognitive, language, emotional and mental health problems. I feel honored and humbled to have had the opportunity to conduct this research and do this project.

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